At Your Service — The Tribune Institute — Housekeeping as a Profession — The New Citizen

Polly Put the Kettle On—We'll All Have Tea

By ELENE FOSTER

WILL some kind gentleman come forward and tell the audience why it is that the rank and file of American men speak of a cup of tea with scorn and derision, and allude to it invariably as "a woman's drink"? And will the same kind gentleman also explain why tea is any more a "woman's drink" than coffee?

I fancy that the fact of the matter is that our men have never taken tea or tea drinking seriously. It is connected in the minds of most of them with the social function known as "an afternoon tea," which is essentially a woman's party. But in view of the fact that in exactly three months from this date we shall be looking about for a beverage which will not only quench the thirst but stimulate our tired brains as well, prejudiced as we may be agin it, it might not be a bad idea to look into this subject of tea and tea drinking for a little.

Tea at the Peace Conference For "Tired Brains"

In the first place, it may interest our tea scoffers to learn that recent dispatches from the peace conference inform us of the fact that tea has become the popular drink of the delegates of all the nations. It appears that wines of rare vintage, together with all sorts of other alcoholic beverages, were provided for their refreshment and stimulation, but after the first few weeks the sound of the popping cork and the fizz of the syphon were succeeded by the hum of the homely teakettle. It was the English delegates who set the fashion, for from long usage the English people, both men and women, have come to appreciate the value of a cup of tea.

Only those who have lived in England can realize the part which tea plays in the lives of the English people, or how important a meal is that which we know as "five o'clock tea," but which in reality is served in England at 4 o'clock.

I remember the stage doorkeeper at the Duke of York's Theatre describing to me one evening the trip which he had taken to Paris for the celebrated one night's performance of "Peter Pan." He was a big, husky Englishman, over 6 feet tall, a hero of the Boer War, with a row of decorations on his coat that rivalled any of those of our returning heroes.

"And what did you think of Paris?" I asked.

"A beastly, 'eathenish town, I call h'it, miss," he replied. "Why, would you believe h'it, I never 'ad me tea in h'all the four days."

I wonder how he would reply to the insinuation that tea is "a woman's drink"?

Where 4 O'clock Tea Is a Regular Meal

The English afternoon tea is just as much a regular meal as breakfast or luncheon or dinner; every one indulges in it, from the King to the workmen in the street. It breaks the long interval between luncheon and dinner, which is always from one to three hours longer than that between breakfast and luncheon, and it gives stimulation to the system at the time of day when the vitality is low.

Work stops in offices and business houses in England at 4 o'clock for a half hour so that the employes may have their tea, and there is no question but that this is a wise economic measure for the employer, for the stimulation of the hot tea gives a fresh zest to the workman, and he finishes the day as conscientiously as he began it. This custom is beginning to be followed to a certain extent in this country. One of the pioneers in the movement was a large tea packing plant in Boston, the managers of which are very enthusiastic over the success of their experiment.

Tea is served on matinee days at the English theatres, both before and behind the curtain. Each theatre has its tearoom, and trays bearing the tea service are passed to those who do not wish to leave their seats.

Behind the green baize curtain the actors are also enjoying the same refreshing beverage. One of my pleasantest recollections of a London season is the picture of the little chintz-hung dressing room, with my "dresser" (a little cockney by the name of Polly) bending over the tiny grate listening for the first note from the teakettle, while a group of actors and actresses, in their stage costumes and makeup (most of them American, by the way), waited, cup and saucer in hand.

The custom of serving tea on the railroad trains in England has always seemed to me particularly "comfy." It is ordered of the guard when one starts on the journey, and at a specified station a wicker basket is passed in at the door. This basket contains a pot of piping hot tea, thin slices of bread and butter and a generous piece of plain cake, all for something like 36 cents.

I wonder what the average untravelled American man would think if he happened into a railroad carriage as I did on one occasion and found four men, one a country gentleman well known in the hunting field, another a banker in the "city" and the other two undergraduates from Oxford going home for the holidays, each with a wicker basket on the seat beside him, indulging in his afternoon tea! Maybe that would serve to open the eyes of Brother Jonathan to the fact that tea drinking is not confined to the weaker sex.

Even Doctors Seem to Agree on Tea Drinking

Physicians agree—that is to say, those whom I have consulted on the subject agree—that tea, if properly made, is one of the most harmless of beverages. There has always been a popular idea afloat that tea tends to make one nervous, as it contains caffein (theine), as does coffee; but physicians point to the Oriental races and to the English people, all of whom are far less nervous than Americans, to disprove this theory. The tannin in tea is, as we all know, the objectionable ingredient from the stomach's point of view, but it is reduced to a minimum if the tea is properly brewed. The boiling water should be poured over the tea leaves and allowed to stand three to five minutes at the most before it is drunk.

Tea stimulates the respiratory organs and through these quickly reacts on the entire system. In point of fact the "tired business man" would find the effect of a cup of hot tea much more restful and lasting than that of any alcoholic beverage, and if this fact could be brought home to the working man you would find that the popular "No Beer, No Work" button would disappear from the landscape and that the whilom corner saloon would blossom forth into a teahouse—and why not?

Our Complicated American Tea

It is not the fault of the hotelkeepers that tea has not been a popular beverage, for they have encouraged its use for the past twenty-five years. The old Hotel Victoria, which had a large English clientèle, seems to have been the first hotel in the city to open a tearoom. This was something like twenty-five years ago. Delmonico's, which at that time occupied the building on the corner of Twenty-sixth Street and Broadway, followed suit, and the Hotel Manhattan, which was opened about twenty years ago, was the next in line. This was the period when "5 o'clock tea" was a fad, when the newly engaged girl received gifts of teacups and silver souvenir spoons, and when every best parlor in the land, from Danvers Centre to New York City, boasted its "tea table." Is it any wonder that men looked upon afternoon tea as a joke? The custom is extremely popular among women just at present, and the tearooms of the smart hotels are crowded. "Tea" in these resorts, however, may cover a multitude of sins; it may mean coffee or chocolate or something stronger—and as for the food which in nine cases out of ten accompanies the beverage, it may rank from chicken à la king to pêche Melba. The simple English service of thin slices of bread and butter, plain cake and a pot of freshly brewed tea is almost unknown in the fashionable tearooms. It is too simply and homey to suit the American idea.

A canvass of the smart hotel tearooms reveals the fact that the proportion of men who patronize them is extremely small and confined almost wholly to English officers. If an American man was found "among those present" he almost invariably had a long glass of whiskey and soda or a cocktail in place of tea. I asked the man in charge of the very smartest tearoom in town if he saw many American men drinking tea, and he replied, with a smile: "I once saw one American man here, madam, who *pretended* to drink a cup of tea."

Let there be no moaning at the bar when all pass up for tea

An Economist, a Medicine, a Beverage and a Warmaker

Aside from all other qualifications tea is by far the cheapest of all the so-called "soft drinks." A pound of tea, which costs anywhere from 50 cents to $1, makes 300 cups—a third of a cent a cup at the most—and the addition of a slice of lemon or milk and sugar wouldn't bring the cost above one cent. Where, I ask you, can you find so refreshing and stimulating a drink for one cent?

Tea began its career as a medicine and grew into a beverage. It is a native of Southern China and was used in that country as early as the eighth century. It became the national drink of Japan in the fifteenth century. The first tea was carried to Europe by the ships of the Dutch West Indies Company in 1610. It was known in France in 1636 and reached Russia in 1638. England welcomed it in 1650 and spoke of it as "that excellent and by all physicians approved China drink called by the Chineans 'Teha' and by other nations 'Tay,' alias 'Tee.'" It cost 15 or 16 shillings a pound in those days, and that, of course, restricted its use to the well to do. It was served at social functions as a great delicacy.

With the increase of shipping facilities, however, the price soon became reduced, and it was introduced into the London coffee houses, where it contended successfully with coffee for popularity, and the habitués of these resorts, wits like Addison and Steele and Johnson, beguiled the long winter evenings over a "dish of tea." Thus, tea soon became a necessity of life, a taxable matter, and there is no need to recall to the mind of any American the fact that Colonial America suffered all sorts of indignities in silence but openly rebelled when it came to an excessive tax on tea, and the Boston tea party marked the beginning of the struggle for independence.

Kinds of Tea and Who Drinks Them

The greatest amount of tea consumed outside of the Oriental countries is drunk in Australia, where it is estimated at from nine and a half to ten pounds a year for each person. England follows with seven pounds a person, and Russia comes next, with two and a half pounds. The consumption in America is only about seven-eighths of a pound for each person. This low amount is attributed partly to the fact that millions of people of foreign birth in the United States have not only never tasted tea but have never even heard of it.

As to the various kinds of teas, they are as numerous as the kinds of wine or brands of tobacco, and their choice is merely a matter of individual taste. Three countries grow tea for the export trade, China, Japan and India, which, of course, includes the island of Ceylon. Twenty years ago Oolong and Formosa tea were the only ones known extensively in this country, but within the last few years Ceylon tea has come to the fore as by far the most popular brand. Orange Pekoe is undeniably the most "fashionable" (I almost said "stylish") tea at the present time, possibly because of its attractive name. One hears all sorts of stories as to the derivation of the name, the most common being that the tea leaves are dried on orange peel, which gives it a distinctly orange flavor; another is that it is mixed with dried orange flowers. The truth is that orange pekoe tea (pronounced peck'-o, by-the-by) is made from the tiny leaves at the top of the stalk, which have a little yellow tip.

Another story is current as to the reason that some tea is green. Many people refuse to buy green tea because they believe that it gets its color from being dried on copper, which corrodes with the moisture and colors the leaves. This is no longer true. All tea, both black and green, is dried on bamboo trays, and none is now colored by artificial means, though Prussian blue was used in the days before the pure food law. Green tea is quickly dried, is not fermented, and contains a little more tannin than the black teas, which are fermented during the longer drying process, in which the tea is spread out in thicker layers.

At the present writing experts assert that the very best tea in the world is that which comes from the Darjeeling Islands, and these same gentlemen are responsible for the information that the most discriminating tea buyers in the world outside the Orient are the Irish.

Tea for Warriors Bold

And here I am at the end of my allotted space and I haven't said a word about the tea ceremonies of China and Japan, the Russian custom of making tea, or a hundred and one other interesting facts to be gleaned in a search for the truth about tea.

I must find room, however, for one more incident that comes to my mind which may help to convince the stubborn American man of the fact that tea is not solely a "woman's drink."

There is a little Moorish café hidden away in the most sordid district of old Tangiers, which is frequented by all sorts of desperate characters, who come in on horseback or camelback from the surrounding country. We were taken there one evening by an Arab friend, and as we sat cross-legged on the floor, Moorish fashion, sipping sweetened water, listening to the music of the tom-toms and watching the blue smoke as it curled from the neck of our friend's narghile, there was suddenly a great clamor outside, then a clatter at the door, and a tall Moor, who looked exactly like a bandit from one of the oldtime comic operas, entered the room. He was evidently a person of great importance, for he was greeted with a great deal of ceremony and much talking and gesticulating. We learned through our native friend that he was a chief who had led his tribe that very day with great success into a neighboring village, conquered the inhabitants thereof and carried away all sorts of valuable loot. After telling his story he took off the rifle which was slung across his shoulder, declared himself "all in" (or its Arabic equivalent) and called for the Arab's favorite drink, a cup of hot tea with a sprig of mint in it.

Now, do you still hold to your opinion that tea is a beverage suitable only for women? Try it yourself, and I'll wager a pound of the very best that you will agree with Dickens (or was it Thackeray?) that "it glorifies the heart, happifies the soul and gives nature a gentle boost."

Philosophers, Chemists, and Doctors on Tea

Samuel Johnson draws his own portrait as "a hardened and shameless tea drinker, who for twenty years diluted his meals with only the infusion of the fascinating plant, who with tea amused the evening, with tea solaced the midnight and with tea welcomed the morning."

An assistant surgeon in the United States Army says: "Tea is the ideal drink for the soldier in the field, can be drunk almost ad libitum without injurious effects—thus easily taking the place of water whenever water is suspected of contamination. If taken in place of water the soldiers are saved the dangers of typhoid and dysentery."

Another noted surgeon says: "Tea served in the hospitals to convalescents cheers the heart, quenches the thirst, revives the faint, stimulates the weak, warms the chilled, cools the heated, refreshes the tired, aids digestion, helps the circulation, prevents disease and is a real boon to the human race."

Chin Hung, scholar and philosopher, to whom all the agricultural and medical knowledge of China is traced, once said: "Tea is better than wine, for it leadeth not to intoxication, neither does it cause a man to say foolish things. It is better than water, for it doth not carry disease, neither does it act as poison."

Lo Yu, a learned Chinest chemist, once said of tea: "It tempers the spirits, harmonizes the mind, dispels lassitude, relieves fatigue, awakens thought and clears the perspective faculties."

Ten Rhyne, Japan's most noted botanist and chemist in 1730, said: "It purifies the blood, drives away frightful dreams, dispels malignant vapors from the brain, mitigates dizziness, regulates and liver and modifies the spleen."

Ways to Make and Use Tea

Prepared In The Tribune Institute

THE American woman is becoming more and more of a connoisseur on tea, and there will be still greater discrimination in tea drinking after July 1, when hot weather and prohibition approach, hand in hand.

The time was when we bought our tea in bulk out of the box in the grocery shop—a box that was opened many times a day to admit the scoop and, incidentally, moisture and air and the odors of cheese and codfish and smoked meats. Good tea is very sensitive, both absorbing the qualities of the surrounding atmosphere and giving off its own fine flavors, so if one wants the same brew with every purchase the only way to get it is to buy a carefully sealed package.

Some maintain that the green tea, quickly dried and unfermented, has slightly more tannin, should be served with lemon and given less time to steep, while the fermented black tea, dried more slowly, and containing less tannin, can stand a little longer steeping and is more appropriate for serving with cream and sugar. However, this is a matter of taste, and many tea drinkers will drink only their favorite brew, black or green, in any case.

While to your real tea drinker tea is tea and no complication of the flavor is desired, many like to vary the customary lemon of the Russian tea with tiny wedge-shaped pieces of orange or grapefruit, stuck with cloves, cubes of dried pineapple dusted with cinnamon, or a dried mint leaf and a crême de menthe cherry with the slice of lemon.

The simple, old-fashioned way of bringing fresh drawn water to a quick boil and pouring it over the leaves (one level teaspoonful to the cup and one for the pot) in a heated pot, which is then covered with a "cosey" and left to steep for three to five minutes, is all right if one pours off the tea at once. But if left standing on the leaves the second cup will contain too much tannin for either the palate's pleasure or the stomach's safety.

Herein lies the advantage of the special devices for making tea shown in the illustration. The London Tea Bob saves the teamaker all responsibility and trouble by bobbing up automatically when the tea has steeped for five minutes. This is no magic, but is brought about by a "time cup" in the top of the teapot, into which the boiling water is poured. The cup rests in a deeper perforated receptacle in which the tea is held. About the top of the time cup are large perforations through which the water passes downward through the tea, leaving a measured quantity in the cup, which drips slowly through a tiny hole in the bottom of it. At the end of five minutes the water has all escaped, and, its weight being gradually removed, the float slowly rises, raising the tea leaves out of the water. No straining is necessary and the second cup of tea is no more bitter than the first.

The tea ball and teaspoon provide the same sort of safeguard, but require more attention. The tea ball teapot shown also obtrudes less on the gossip that goes with the beverage, as the leaves are held in a little perforated metal basket which is lowered by the chain into the hot water, and at the end of the three or four minute period the ball is easily lifted by the knob and held with the chain in the space provided for it in the cover of the teapot.

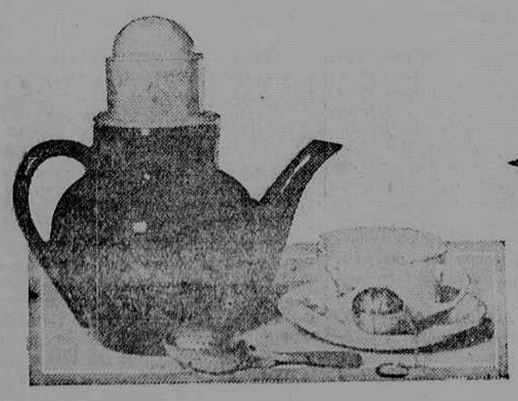
Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of making iced tea just as carefully as though it were to be served hot. It should be strained after the constitutional four minutes of steeping, cooled, and placed in the ice chest until ready for serving, unless perchance it is made fresh and poured hot over the ice cubes in the glasses, the best way of all, but one that may be prohibited by the threatened ice shortage. If a quantity of iced tea is to be made, a sliced lemon added when the tea is hot and allowed to stand until served will give a zest that two or three lemons will not impart after the tea is cold. This is worth remembering when lemons are high.

Almost any of the fresh fruits can be added with advantage to iced tea, and a few slices of peeled, iced cucumber will impart still another flavor. A bouquet of fresh mint is a particularly pleasing addition, and the maraschino cherries and cordial will make of the iced tea quite a "party drink."

The following recipes, in which tea plays an important part, are guaranteed to give delicious results:

Tea Sherbet

Boil two cupsful of strained tea, one cupful of sugar and the grated yellow rind of two lemons and one orange for eight minutes, then strain and cool. When cold add the juice of the lemons and orange and three tablespoonsful of maraschino cordial. Turn into a chilled freezer, and when it begins to congeal add the stiffly whipped white of one egg. Continue freezing until firm and smooth.



Tea Rhubarbade

This is a very refreshing drink for a warm day. Wash and cut a bunch of young rhubarb into inch lengths and stew it in one quart of water until tender, then drain. (Use the fruit pulp for tarts or marmalade.) Add the rhubarb water to one pint of cold, strained tea with the juice of a lemon and two sliced oranges; sweeten to taste. Chill on the ice, and when ready to serve pour into tall, thin glasses, half filled with cracked ice.

Prunes in Tea Jelly

Cook half a pound of prunes until tender in just enough water to cover, and when nearly cooked add a third of a cupful of sugar. Cool, strain off the juice and add enough strained tea to make a cupful and a half. Remove the pits and cut the fruit in quarters. Soak one generous tablespoonful of gelatine in a quarter of a cupful of cold water and dissolve it in the hot prune juice and tea. Remove from the fire, add the grated yellow rind of one orange, one tablespoonful of candied lemon peel, finely chopped, and two tablespoonsful of lemon juice. Set aside and stir occasionally as it thickens. Then stir in the prunes and a quarter of a cupful of split, blanched almonds. Mould in individual moulds and serve with boiled custard or cream.

Tea Julep

Pour into a large bowl one quart of strained tea, and when cold add a bunch of fresh mint, two sliced oranges, half a peeled and sliced cucumber, the strained juice of two lemons and sugar to taste. Let it stand on the ice for two hours to chill and ripen. Just previous to serving remove the mint and cucumber and add a pint of chilled ginger ale. Pour into a tall crystal pitcher half filled with cracked ice. Add a few strawberries and a bouquet of fresh mint in season.

A Tea Dansant Cup

Mix together one quart of strained tea, a small can of grated pineapple, one quart of unfermented grape juice, two sliced limes and oranges, one cupful of sugar and a quart of carbonated water, poured from a height. Pour slowly over a block of ice that has been placed in a punch bowl and serve as soon as it is chilled. Decorate the block of ice with quarters of orange, a bouquet of fresh mint and large maraschino cherries or strawberries.